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Copy Number: **64**

ISSN: 0316 - 2583

Price: \$ 2.00

38

(37)

\$.15

ANTHOL 4

WINTER 75

\$ 2.00

EDITORS:

ROBERT MORRISON
GILBERT PLAW
DIANE KEATING

ARTWORK
COVER DESIGN:

SUSAN HUDSON

ANTHOL PRESS

ISSN 0316-2583



2021

TO OUR READERS:

In the interest of offering our readers a more comprehensive insight into the progress of Canadian writers, we are introducing a new format. Henceforth, this periodical will be divided into three distinct sections.

In one section we will feature the works(s) of one or more writers. Poets/Authors interested in appearing in this section, should submit manuscripts of at least thirty pages, which present either an overview of the writer's work to date (previously published material may be included in this case) or a recently completed manuscript/work in progress, from which a sizable excerpt can be taken. Writers can expect an exposure of fifteen to twenty-five pages.

In another section, the editors are particularly interested in publishing both essays investigating Canadian cultural or literary issues, and reviews of current Canadian publications that have not received sufficient critical attention. Manuscripts of two to six pages will be considered.

A third section of the publication will be comprised of new poems and short stories that merit attention in themselves. Manuscripts should be from six to ten pages in length.

All submissions should be accompanied by a brief summation of previous literary activities: readings, publications, works in progress, etc.

Please direct all correspondence to:

ANTHOL

71 Pardo Ave., # 208
Pointe Claire, P.Q.
H9R 3H4

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2021




2021


PREVIEW

RICHARD SOMMER

These are two sections from a long narrative called Whispered Lineage, centered around the life of the Tibetan yogi and poet Milarepa (1052 - 1135 A.D.). These excerpts deal, respectively, with Milarepa's relationship with his teacher Marpa and with his principal disciple Gampopa, the founder of the Kagyu-pa monastic order of Tibetan Buddhism. Richard Sommer has already published two volumes of poetry with Delta Can: Homage to Mr. MacMullin (1969) and The Blue Sky Notebook, (1974).



"I've been working off and on for many years at whatever I thought at any particular moment was poetry. Sometimes I think the only continuity in that is the continuing to do it, and there are moments when I seem to understand that writing poetry is a way of being in the world for me. What that world becomes in its full proportions I can't yet say, and maybe I'll never need to. That is to say, I think maybe poetry is a path." —Richard Sommer.



MARPA

In a nutshell, your uncle and aunt
had chiselled you out of your land, your comforts of life,
your inheritance.

You work for them as a boy
and they work you hard.
Your mother saves up a little for her revenge

and gets you to do it for her.
Apprentice to a black magician
you get the procedures you need.

You send hailstorms at harvest time to beat flat
their fields, their food for the winter.
You destroy them selectively.

You turn a herd of ponies into giant scorpions
the largest of which grips in his claws
the central pillar of your uncle's and aunt's

house during their eldest son's wedding.
The horses of the wedding guests
stampede against the same central pillar

and the whole house crashes.
Thirty-five dead, the bride, all
of your uncle's children, all his ponies.

The black magician saddens at what he hears.
He tells you to go see another magician,
a white magician, Marpa the Translator.

. . .

. . .

Marpa had a dream from the lineage
richly iconic in its embroidery,
telling him his son was coming to meet him.

His wife dreamt that he should wash
a crystal vessel brought from Urgyen
and set it atop a hill, shining.

Marpa got up that morning to plow
(strange for a wealthy lama to do)
and took with him two jars of chang,

sat on a rock, sipped chang, waited.
You meanwhile, a taut and skinny boy, asked
everyone you met where Marpa was.

You met his son, who said that Marpa was ploughing.
You walked till you found a fat lama ploughing,
with round full eyes.

You fell into a bliss.
You asked him where
Marpa was.

I'll take you to him if
you'll plough this field for me,
Marpa the Translator said.

. . .

. . .

That field is still called Field of Help.
A path runs around the edge of the field in winter,
straight across in summer.

His son comes out to lead you in.
Marpa, wet dust still in his brows
and under the wings of his nose

is sitting on a lot of cushions,
letting his enormous belly hang out,
sipping chang.

You go up, get down, touch your forehead
to his feet, put his feet on top of your head
and ask for room, board, and Dharma.

I will give you food and shelter, Marpa said,
or I will give you teaching,
but I won't give you all three. Choose.

You choose the teaching.
You try to give him your books about hailstorms
to set beside the books beside his shrine.

He refuses to allow them in.
He doesn't want his own books to catch
their disease, the principal disease of books.

. . .

. . .

He gave you a hell of a time.
When you brought your offering of rice and a copper pot
and the load slipped despite you

to the floor of Marpa's house, shaking it,
he kicked over the sack
and made you get it out of his house,

then had you bring the pot back in again,
laid his hand on it, closed his eyes,
then tears came into his fat eyes

and he said, it is what it should be.
I offer it to my teacher Naropa, he said.
Then he shook it violently, banging it,

making as much noise with it as he possibly could.

. . .

. . .

He then told you
when you asked him for teachings,
to go bomb some of his enemies with hailstorms,

which you did, killing some,
after which he laughed at your presumption
to offer a few hailstorms for the teachings

he had been at such pains to go to India to get.
He nicknamed you the Sorceror.
Can you bring them back to life? he asked you.

If you can, I will give you Dharma, he said.
At this you wept and took to your bed.
Next day he apologized to you for having been difficult.

I have a reasonable proposition, he said.
I would like you to build a house for my son.
Then I will give you the teachings.

. . .

. . .

What Marpa wanted you to do
was to build a house for him on a strategic pinnacle
where three of his neighbors (but not Marpa)

had agreed never to build.
You didn't know any of this when you agreed,
but there was bound to be trouble.

First Marpa took you to a mountain ridge facing east,
and told you exactly where to build a circular house,
and you had finished half of it when he came along

and told you he had changed his mind
and took you, weaving as he walked,
to another mountain ridge facing west

where he told you to build a crescent house
and you had finished half when he came along
and told you he must have been drunk the other day

and took you to a mountain ridge facing north
and told you to build a triangular house
and you had finished a third when he came along

and accused you of sorcery, of trying
to catch him, the great Marpa,
in a magic triangle,

and told you to tear it down,
at which point the blisters on your back
were something else,

no longer entirely you.
When Mrs. Marpa saw the way your back looked,
she made Marpa give you first initiation.

. . .

. . .

Then he took you to the forbidden place
and told you to build an ordinary
rectangular house, nine stories high

with a luxury scrollwork arborium on top.
This house, Marpa said, will not be demolished.
Let my wife witness this promise.

Some of his disciples who were into magic
came by one day, and just for the hell of it
summoned a huge boulder to the spot.

Naturally you used it as your cornerstone.
You had built on it as far as the second story
when Marpa came along again

and pointed out that you hadn't brought the stone
yourself, and that you had agreed
to do the whole job yourself.

So you pulled it all down,
pulled out the stone,
and put it all back up again.

Then Marpa came along and ordered you
to put the stone into his son's house
as cornerstone. So you did.

. . .

. . .

Meanwhile the uneasy neighbors watched.
Marpa was obviously mad, getting this kid
to build houses halfway,

all over the countryside,
then to tear them down.
So when you started building on their spot

they decided to hold off killing you just
so long as you didn't finish,
assuming you would pull this one down also.

When you got far enough so they could see
that you were really going to do it,
they came over with pitchforks and bows.

Marpa conjured an army of armed men
to mill around the house
and scare the neighbors away.

Now, said Marpa, finish your building.
You asked if you could just share an initiation
he was doing, anyway, for another disciple.

He grabbed you by the hair
and threw you out of the room.
You'll get initiated when you can pay the fee,
he said.

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Next morning Marpa came along
and told you to stop work on his son's house
which you had erected to the seventh story

and put up another house with twelve pillars,
an antechamber and a chapel,
which he needed in a hurry.

It could serve as an annex to the main
building. When you were through, he said,
he would give you the teachings for sure.

Meanwhile his wife brought you on the sly
a chunk of butter, a piece of blanket,
and a copper pot.

you took them to Marpa as your fee.
What, he yelled, these things are mine.
Bring me something of your own.

He then kicked you out of the room.

. . .

. . .

You thought about killing yourself,
but Mrs. Marpa wouldn't have it.
You sobbed, and got to work on the annex.

By now your whole back was open and running.
You showed it to her
and she went to see her husband about it.

Has he finished the ten-story house for my son?
He has just finished the annex, she said,
which is much larger.

When he has finished the ten-story house,
said Marpa, I will give him the teachings.
How is his back? Is it really bad?

Terrible, answered the reverend mother,
so the next day Marpa came along
and told you how much Tilopa's disciple,

Naropa, had had to suffer.
Did you suffer when you were with your teacher,
you asked Marpa. My teacher, he answered,

was Naropa.
So Marpa pulled off his robe and showed you
how donkeys' backs are padded

when they have sores, and went away.

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. . .

Marpa, it is said, shed secret tears about you.
The sores on your back got worse
so you went to ask if you could rest a while.

If he can't work, then he can't, Marpa said,
but if he can, he must.
The reverend mother put you to bed.

Together you planned a fake departure.
You would pretend to be going away.
You would say to her, Oh, just let me go,

where Marpa could hear and see as he sat
sipping chang, his belly out.
When he heard your little play,

he got up and struck you several times
around your face and head,
accusing you of stealing the flour

the reverend mother had given you
to carry on your back.
You have offered me body, speech, and mind,

Marpa roared. I own you.
I could cut you into little bits of meat,
and nobody could stop me.

Now: get back to work, he said.

. . .

. . .

Mrs. Marpa felt sorry enough for you
to give you some instruction in meditation
herself, which was a help.

You showed your love by making her two chairs,
one for milking the cows
and the other to sit on when she roasted barley.

You got back into the swing of working.
Then another disciple was going to be given
the grand initiation, and you wanted

to take it along with him.
Marpa's wife gave you a dark blue turquoise
from her own belongings, her dowry.

Marpa took the turquoise and looked at it.
He asked, Where did you get
this turquoise, little Sorcerer?

You told him. What is yours,
Marpa told his wife, is mine,
and consequently not his.

Marpa fastened the turquoise to his necklace.
When you didn't immediately leave,
he knocked you down and was going

to take his stick to you
when his frightened son intervened,
allowing you to jump out the window.

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You wept bitterly for the gold you had lost,
the nuggets of gold you had once had,
and for the release of enlightenment

you would never have.
You packed up your books to leave,
and got four or five miles out

when you began remembering Mrs. Marpa's
hot steaming meals, and decided
you couldn't go without thanking her.

But an old man came along and hired you
to read to him the eight thousand verses
of the Prajna-Paramita.

In it you read of a man who had sold
his own flesh for the teachings of the Buddha.
You jumped up and went back to Marpa.

Marpa meanwhile had wrapped his head
in his robe and would speak to no one,
and that's how you found him.

Listen, son, he said, finish your building.
Hearing this, you had had it
and got ready to go away.

Then Mrs. Marpa had a suggestion.
I know a pupil of his who has the same
teachings he does. Go to him.

Next feast-day, she got everybody so drunk
they all fell asleep. Then she forged a letter
of introduction and lifted

the garland and rosary Naropa had given
Marpa, and gave them to you.
These will serve to introduce you, she said.

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. . .

Marpa found out, of course, after you had
been accepted by his pupil
on the strength of letter, rosary, and garland.

The disciple ordered you to bomb
some of his enemies with your hailstorms,
which you did, with the exception

of the triangular field of one old pleading woman,
which you spared,
and then went back to your new teacher.

You brought him a sackful of dead birds,
killed by the hail.
He promised them fortunate rebirth,

within reach of the Dharma.
He snapped his fingers and they flew off.
Then he got busy, initiated you

and gave you his teachings.
You practiced them, but they didn't work.
Then a letter came from Marpa,

inviting his disciple to a ceremony
and requesting you to be returned to him.
You confessed your deception to Marpa's disciple.

Then came a secret message from Mrs. Marpa.
It said, your teacher will now give you
your initiation and teachings.

You returned with the disciple
who brought along almost everything he owned,
and gave you a white silk scarf

to give to Marpa, together with a bag of cheese.

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You ran ahead to be the first to see Marpa.
You bowed before him as he faced east.
He turned himself to face west.

You walked around and bowed to him again,
and he turned himself to face south.
You told him his disciple was coming

to give Marpa everything he owned.
You asked if a refreshment of chang could be readied
for him, considering the circumstances.

What kind of reception do you think I got,
Marpa roared,
when I lugged the sutras in from India?

Mrs. Marpa, however, stepped in and got the chang.
The ceremony was to be the consecration of a house,
the house you had built, almost.

Marpa sang a psalm.
The disciple gave him everything, except,
he said, one old nanny-goat too lame to travel.

Go get me the nanny-goat, Marpa ordered.
The disciple brought her in on his back.
Good, Marpa said, and now I want to know

why you have given the teachings
to this scapegrace little Sorcerer here?
Marpa glanced meaningfully at his stick.

Because you sent Naropa's ruby rosary and garland
with him, the disciple stammered.
Then Marpa really got mad.

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. . .

Mrs. Marpa locked herself in the chapel.
You ran.
You wanted to kill yourself again

but the disciple found you and told you
that the teaching declared your life too sacred
for your own soiled hands to touch.

Someone was sent to bring you both in
to the presence of Marpa.
You found him with tears in his eyes.

Marpa looked at you while you took your seat.
Today you are the chief guest, he said,
and then he talked for a time about anger.

To everyone he explained what he had been doing.
He had been giving you the teachings, he explained.
That night your head was shaved.

Your dress was changed.
You were initiated by Marpa
and he gave you the name Milarepa,

and after one of Mrs. Marpa's hot meals,
you sang him your first song as his fee.
Then he sent you to meditate in a cave.

You got the truth for a song, Milarepa.

. . .

. . .

GAMPOPA

Dagbo Lhaje, alias Gampopa, the man from Gampo.
Son of the Heart of Milarepa,
disciple of whose coming Marpa had foretold

that Milarepa would have twenty-seven disciples,
one like the sun, one like the moon,
twenty-five like the stars:

Gampopa was the sun, also known
as the Snow Lion of the Teachings,
also known and foretold by the Buddha

as the Physician of the North, born Dunba Dharmadrag,
eldest son of first wife of Wutso Gabar Jalbo,
clan Nyi Wa, Seba Valley, A.D. 1079.

Trained from early age in oratory and counselling,
by age fifteen had progressed through more
than five Nyingmapa Tantras,

had been taught the Eight Medicines by his father,
at twenty-two married the sister of a chieftain,
reputed to be like the moon, Dharma Aui.

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Her softness in the house was so perfect
that always while she was bringing him son and daughter
she seemed to be wrapped in dream distance.

Then the plague struck, the dream froze to ice in his heart,
he followed his son's swollen body to the charnel ground
and when he returned he heard fresh screams from the women:

his little daughter, wide-eyed, was dead.
In a few days, the pale and stumbling moon herself
displayed familiar symptoms.

She took too long a time to die.
Doomed, in hot pain, she clung.
Deep through one long afternoon beside her bed,

his voice broke silence to ask why, why
did she cling to her house, her land, her jewels?
If so, he would give them away, to the monks and the poor.

When she could reply, she said, it is you, I cling to you.
I cannot bear that you should know other women.
I want you to give your life to the teachings of the Buddha.

I will do it, he said, I will swear these things to you.
Take an oath before me, she said, bring a witness.
He called his uncle into the room. He swore.

Now you can die, he said.
She took his hand, tears rose in eyes, she was dead.
He paid for the funeral, and gave all his wealth away.

She was cremated, and he built for her the Tower of the Hostess.
The book says he had several tsa-tsa Buddha figures made
from a paste of her scorched flesh and crumbled bone.

Filled with the paradox
of his new and empty happiness,
the Snow Lion entered the monasteries.

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. . .

One guru charged too much,
so Gampopa left, doubting his compassion.
Another made him a monk.

He studied under five more professors.
He studied by day, meditated through the night.
No insect, it is said, settled on his body.

Those who analyzed his dreams said they pointed to
the tenth and last stage of the path of the Bodhisattvas,
and suggested ultimate enlightenment any day now.

Then he dreamed of a green and skinny man in rags
who flicked spittle in his eyes,
opening them to the clearest world he had ever seen.

That same night, in a valley to the west, Milarepa dreamed
he filled an empty crystal vase with nectar
from his own vase which was of silver.

Gampopa overheard one day three hungry beggars praise
a yogi, Milarepa, who could fly from place to place,
who practiced the mystic heat and the great symbol.

Gampopa fell into a deep faint in his hiding place,
and in his dream a girl in the dress of the women of Mon
came to him as he beat on a huge drum

and handed him a skull-cup full of milk.
Drink it, she said, and disappeared toward the west.
Gampopa awoke and followed when it was light.

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. . .

Throughout his long journey he wept,
he cried aloud, he talked to himself.
The oldest beggar knew the way and guided him.

The old man fell sick, forgot the way, lagged behind.
Night fell, and Gampopa, with his face in his hands
falling to the ground, was blind in his own tears.

Then the old man was bending beside his shoulder,
motioned westward with a bony hand,
then faded into green shadow as day broke.

When there were people, Gampopa asked the way.
When there were none, he just walked west.
He hugged a pedlar who knew where Milarepa was,

and burst into more tears, seeing him as Milarepa.
He entered a vast plain and rested on a boulder.
The plain began to wheel slowly around him,

then faster and faster.
He lay in the dirt for half a day.
Awake, each hair on his body was a hot needle.

No food or water for two nights and two days.
He vowed: if I die without seeing him,
my teacher Milarepa,

I will move toward him through the spaces between my lives,
in one hurt body or another.
I will find him and bring him my mind.

A monk of the Khadampa sect happened by,
gave him a drink of water,
set him on his feet and sent him on his way.

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. . .

Milarepa's laughter, waiting for him at Fortune Hill,
sometimes in the middle of teaching
flowed out over seated and listening people.

They thought he must be laughing at or with them.
They asked him.
The son of my heart is coming, he replied.

I have just helped him, just fallen among stones.
He will be here tomorrow or the day after.
Whoever first sees and welcomes him will move

quickly to enlightenment, he added.
The marketplace of the town under Milarepa's mountain
was empty when Gampopa limped in.

One woman was weaving on a loom in thin sunlight.
She led him to her house and fed him,
then pointed up the slope behind them.

I am here to welcome you, she said.
The Jetsun knows you are coming.
It was he who helped you get up when you fell.

I must be a special case, Gampopa thought,
and when Milarepa felt the flow of his new disciple's pride
he kept him waiting fourteen days to see him.

. . .

. . .

When he finally arrived,
there were three Milarepas sitting on rocks
in front of a cave.

At last one of them pointed to another,
saying, that's him.
The third smiled in silence.

Gampopa set out before them as they converged
the sixteen ounces of gold he had kept for years,
together with a brick of tea.

Milarepa leaned forward into the silence
and tossed a chunk of gold into the sky.
I offer this to Marpa, he chanted.

Music and light blew the clouds open.
A skinny hand held a skull-cup of wine
under Gampopa's nose. Drink this, it said.

Half was already gone, Milarepa's mouth wet.
Gampopa stopped, his years of abstinence and vows
stopping his throat, his gorge rising. He drank.

Keep your gold and tea, Milarepa told him.
What name do you know yourself by, Milarepa asked.
Let me tell you about the lineage, Milarepa said.

. . .

. . .

This is the lineage, Milarepa sang.
Through Dorje Chang through
Tilopa through Naropa through Marpa

through Milarepa and on through
someone to be named someday through whom
the teachings will fan out into a monastic order,

the practitioners of the Six Yogas, the Tantra,
where the line, the gossamer line of being
at Tibet's fall long hence into alien hands

shall be carried over mountains to the south,
back to India and across oceans to the west and east
by a few men in red blankets.

The line extends, Gampopa, from one Buddha
to the next, then to the next and the next
until all living things realize that they are Buddha.

We carry the open secret, as open as space,
that the Buddhas are everywhere already
if you can see them.

If you can see them, open to the open secret,
if you can see me as I am, you carry the lineage.
And, where Milarepa sat, a thorn tree in the wind,

Gampopa saw no one.
Then reappeared, grinning, and pissed in the pot of tea
which all present found exquisitely sweet.

. . .

. . .

There followed weeks of teaching,
months of meditation, nights of dreams,
dreams vaster than the stars overhead,

dreams of mandalas that all creatures,
all Buddhas, all the universes make together,
dreams of all the glowing hells at the edge of things.

Gampopa starved, shook uncontrollably, went blind.
His body evaporated, except for the bones,
and he dreamed of twenty-four alien signs,

naked stumbled with them to Milarepa's cave one night
where the old man slept, his clothes under his head,
and told him the dream of the signs:

A silk-brimmed hat with a fur edge.
The image of an eagle.
Green boots decorated with brass and silver buckles.

A white silk robe with red spots, pearls, gold thread.
A tasselled belt embroidered with flowers and pearls.
A felt scarf with jasmines worked in silver.

A staff with seven jewels set into the grip.
A skull-cup full of a golden liquid.
A sack of many colors, filled with rice.

The furred skin of a wild animal for a cushion.
A rich and full-flowering meadow full of cattle.
Another meadow full of bowing women,

A bodhisattva sitting among them on a Lotus Throne,
his skin the color of a rainbow in the sun,
a fountain playing in front of him,

a blaze of fire around his head,
the sun and moon circling in his heart.
Gampopa stopped, stood shivering before Milarepa,

who scratched his old balls and said,
you're trying too hard and thinking too much.
Take it easy, my son.

. . .

. . .

Months of teachings whispered in his ear, or sung,
months of meditation, dreams, experiences, realizations,
months of Special Miraculous Powers later,

Milarepa told him to go.

You don't need to stay any longer, he said.

Go to the mountain of Gambo Dar, east of here.

Find a hill there shaped like a king on his throne,
the woods around his feet forming a golden mandala,
his helmet like the hat I wear.

Seven hills prostrate themselves before him.

On the neck of the middle one you will find your disciples.

Go meet them, my son, with your mind and your eyes.

Before Gampopa left, he was given a new name,

a golden panacea empowered with spit from Milarepa's tongue,
a tinder pouch, the Four Initiations, and a blessing.

Milarepa walked a short way with him.

They came to a river and Milarepa stopped.

Even your teacher, he said, is delusory, a dream.

Gampopa turned, waded the river, went on.

Then, from a long way, the old man called him back:

I have saved the most precious teaching for the last.

Milarepa then pulled up his robe.

Look, he commanded.

His body was thick with callous, seamed with scars.

See what I have undergone. Practice!

At the next ridge Gampopa looked back.

His teacher was wrapped in dream-distance.

ESSAYS AND REVIEWS



CLARK BLAISE

CANADIAN CONVOCATION:

Graduation Address - St. George's School

By a once-in-a-lifetime fluke 1975 finds me precisely twice the age of all you 17-year-olds in this graduating class. Or, to put it another way, back in 1958 when I was graduating from high school in Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania - a very different person in that foreign time and place - many of you were not quite born. Looked at that way, I'm very old. Or you're very young. I prefer to think of you as young; closer in age to my own eleven-year-old son who will, God willing, be sitting with you in six more years.

This, then, is what I'm here to talk about. Being thirty-four, being seventeen, being eleven; the differences that six years, seventeen years, can make. In other words, I am talking about the passing of time, the complex, intricate workings of destiny, aging, working, growing wiser and more bitter, crossing thirty-five and realizing that I've crested. Pretty soon you won't be able to see me at all, for I'll already be coasting down the otherside.

In preparation for this talk, I read a book by the only writer I know who gets invited to give a lot of speeches to functions like this, and who has the grace, or concupiscence, to collect them in a book. Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. published Wampeters, Foma and Granfalloon last year, in Stockholm, the library rededication at Wheaton College, the National Institute of Arts and Letters, the American Physical Society, and the Graduating class of Bennington College. He also spoke at Earth Day, Biafra rallies, and anti-Vietnam demonstrations. He even granted a long interview to Playboy. Obviously, he can appeal to everybody. And his message to everybody is the same: to the Bennington

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girls he advised having a good time for a few more years, then eventually, if they still felt like improving the world, to work in some way for a socialist form of government. "Free Enterprise is much too hard on the old and the sick and the shy and the poor and the stupid, and on people nobody likes... They lack that certain something that Nelson Rockefeller, for instance, so abundantly has." To an anti-Vietnam rally he admitted, "we will continue to elect priggish, ignorant, stubborn people to high office... Humanity will come to look like a defective machine to the noble experimenters. They will order our policemen and soldiers to bang on it hard, to make it run smoothly." And to the rededication crowd at notoriously second-rate Wheaton College, he spoke of pornography. "If we are to discuss truthfully what America is and what it can become, our discussion must be in absolutely rotten taste, or we won't be discussing it at all."

You see, then, how easy it would be to address the graduating class of, say, Mt. Lebanon High School in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. For reasons unrelated to my academic standing that June night seventeen years ago, I was forbidden to attend those ceremonies, but I remember who the speaker was and I know from friends what he said. (I, thank God, went to Forbes Field that night, sat in the right field stands and communed with my all-time hero in things non-literary, the Pirate right-fielder, Roberto Clemente). Our commencement speaker was someone rich and boring with more standing in the community than he could really use, so he handed out an hour or more of tips enabling the young graduates to learn from him how they could become as rich and admirable in the shortest possible time. And I missed my undergraduate commencement as well; that was 1962, and the speaker was the local Republican congressman for the district in which my university was located. He was a Denison alumni as well, already spearheading the movement for Goldwater's 1964 nomination, and he is still in Congress enjoying great success for being a loyal Republican who nevertheless avoided the pitfalls of Watergate. He did that the hard way - he'd already broken with

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Nixon over the trip to China, and even ran against him as a true Conservative in the 1972 primaries. I was in graduate school before I met my first Democrat, and since then, I don't think I've known anyone but socialists, on either side of the border. I'd relish the opportunity to go back to Mt. Lebanon High School, or to Denison. It would be almost too easy to go back to those bastions of upper middle class Republicanism and to blast them into an awareness of national shame, world need, their personal complacency. I would want, like Kurt Vonnegut, to spread a little gloom and cynicism wherever I went. But speaking to St. George's kids who are probably already complacent in their cynicism, who bear no blame for vicious wars or scheming politicians - - - that requires a greater art, and a much more different art, from the one I possess.

I mentioned six years. Six years ago, you were riding bikes - - - none of those ten-gear models were yet on the market - - - you were ten or eleven and hating the opposite sex. Girls were being trained for domestic arts, following a suitably genteel education at McGill (CEGEPs were brand new). You were, thank God, too young for the drugs that were worrying your parents about your older brothers and sisters. But if you think the difference between eleven and seventeen is vast, and if 1969 and 1975 appear to you as different eras, then I want to say that between seventeen and twenty-three the differences will be profound and permanent, not merely physical (however gratifying). Your next commencement is the one that counts.

In 1958, I was a Pittsburgh high schooler bound for a career in science, like all my friends: after a great many moves and too much hardship, my parents had finally made money, built their first house, and actually owned two furniture stores. We had been living in Pittsburgh six years - - - twelve times longer than I'd ever lived in any city. I was a Pittsburgher going into geology, from a secure financial base - - - probably, I thought, I'd sell the stores after taking them over to finance a few years of independent research. I'd never had a date, I was scared to death

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of the whole physical contact. I was at Forbes Field in the right field stands, and probably the only thing that could have deterred me from my plans in that late-Eisenhower summer of 1958 would have been an offer from the Pittsburgh Pirates' organization to become a batboy or a peanutvender, or anything anywhere in the marvelous game of baseball.

Well, in six years, pudgy rich little Clark Blaise met with a series of accidents. Some seemed brutal at the time, inexplicable and undeserved. Unrequited hatred is the basis of my art. I came from that social class where accidents happen, lives are ineptly led, simple complications prove insurmountable. Other accidents have been only bizarre. Still others - my wife, my children, my writing, my early years in Montreal, have taken me by surprise, and have been better to me than I deserved. But the point is this: by 1964, six years after my high school graduation, on the night most of you were gurgling in your cribs, I was married and a father and taking a teaching job in Milwaukee and I had begun publishing short stories: my mother had returned to Winnipeg and my father was already in his second marriage in the past three years and the stores had both gone to his first new wife, while he sat in Florida sponging off the second new wife, who drove a Lincoln Continental, came from Manchester, New Hampshire, spoke French and was Republican Committeewoman for that Notorious New Hampshire district ruled by the fascistically-inclined publisher, William Loeb, the place where Barry Goldwater, the only possible candidate he could support, was nevertheless considered a dangerous radical socialist, though probably not yet in the pay of the KGB. Kennedy was dead, Johnson was sending troops to the Dominican Republic and pouring them into Vietnam, and I was mounting the rostrum for the first time in my life, to speak out against the whole policy and I was having the FBI and the Milwaukee Police subversive squad sitting in parked cars outside our apartment, photographing the dangerous radicals seen entering our premises.

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Such are the changes of six years.

I mean that the changes wrought in six years between high school and college graduation are vastly more significant than the six years between eleven and seventeen, and that none of you tonight can yet know the person you are to become, or if, indeed, fate will let you become a person at all. Roberto Clemente, after all, half a god in my imagination, is dead. What I have to say to you in 1975 on the threshold of my thirty-fifth year and in your seventeenth, will have no bearing upon the world you will truly be entering only in 1981 or 82. Think of the differences between 1958 and 1964. Between 11 and 17. Between being a rich American geologist and a poor Canadian short story writer. Think of the perils of being a minority anywhere; of being a privileged minority in the midst of a roused nationalistic majority. Think of Vonnegut's message to the women of Bennington: "Everything is going to become unimaginably worse, and never get better again." That's a fair statement, one that any thirty-five year old would agree with, though I'm not sure it's the message I should be giving, or Vonnegut be giving, here tonight. For things also get unimaginably - - or at least, unpredictably - - better, and some old problems never come back to plague you again. And if Vonnegut has left that out of his message, he shouldn't have, for it is the only avenue out of the despair, or cynicism, or suicidal doubt that plagues seventeen year olds, and thirty five year olds, but rarely eleven year olds, alike.

But since the good things are unpredictable, we can't really talk about them. Keep them in slight reserve. Keep your eye on the bad things, the traps, the local Montreal traps and the vaguer Canadian traps that aren't quite as obvious or as deadly as the American traps that Vonnegut talks about, but which are, on a one-to-one basis, every bit as ruinous.

For instance, a couple of weeks ago, I participated in a giant happening called 'Canada Day' at a school not

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far from here. Perhaps seventy-five poets, novelists, translators, playwrights, journalists and teachers of Canadian literature participated. I participated mightily, reading three sections from a single long story at three separate sessions. This year, I've given perhaps twenty other such readings; I've been happy to give them and I've needed the small income they sometimes provide - - - I would have to sell nearly two hundred copies of a hardcover book in order to earn the normal \$100. speaking fee paid by the Canada Council: and since my latest book, Tribal Justice sold only 600 copies in Canada, you can see that in a total of three hour's reading, I can earn as much, as from the two years it took me to write it. Yet, it is a danger. And "Canada Days" are an even graver danger to a person like me. For it is writing, not Canada that was being celebrated (though probably for something like "writing" you couldn't get a thousand students to show up, nor would you get forty high schools to cancel their classes); Montreal is a fortunate city indeed that a respectable showing of poets and novelists can be mustered, from a city that is, after all, much smaller than Winnipeg, when considered from its minority population. Probably no city on this continent of comparable size could boast such a turn-out. But rather than pointing this out to the students, the issue got confused with national destiny, with basically political questions of the people's will, the national consciousness, whatever. Writers were blandly referred to as custodians of this precious national consciousness, and it became, somehow, a function of one's national duty to attend and appreciate. From the undeserved anonymity that was the lot of Canadian writer throughout most of his history - - and that caused today's generation of mature novelists such as Mordecai Richler, Norman Levine, Jack Ludwig, Margaret Laurence, Mavis Gallant, Robert Kroetsch, Brian Moore, Marie-Claire Blais, Anne Hébert to leave the country and take up permanent residence elsewhere - - we have come full circle with dizzying speed. Two books of short stories land me on podiums across the country, admittedly greater achievements have billboarded Margaret Atwood, Margaret Laurence, Mordecai Richler, Irving Layton and Leonard Cohen. From

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the stunning lack of support that made all thoughts of professional writing absurd in this country, we have now created a sizeable community of professional poets. I've talked with poets who've hit Montreal at the tail end of sixty or seventy readings, their eyes glazed, their manuscripts still in the airport of their last reading, but no matter - - - by now they know their work, and hate it, by heart. In fact, I've heard writers greet each other in airports, compare their schedules, and arrange for drinks at the next high altitude bar before their flights to Edmonton, Fredericton, St. John's or Vancouver. One memorable moment this January at Toronto Airport found five pay phones in use simultaneously, with Alice Munro, Maivis Gallant, Ray Smith, me, and Kent Thompson all waiting for planes, all making various long-distance phone calls to various editors, wives, or lovers. And I thought to myself then, no one would take us for writers. Worse, we were not taking ourselves as writers. We were businessmen, Self-employed businessmen, on an expense account trip. Or worse, we were high-level mandarins from a rather authoritarian, perhaps even communist nation, and we were enjoying privileges denied our fellow citizens. We were serving the national interest, we were important people and we knew it. And that same feeling was to return on "Canada Day"; namely that only chairman Brezhnev had a right to refer to a nation's writer's as a national resource, as shapers and upholders of the national will and consciousness. I should always ask myself the kinds of literary questions that I respect - - - namely, would George Orwell, James Joyce or Thomas Mann, be comfortable doing this? I should keep a small quotation in my cheque book, in the place where I'm accustomed to cashing my honorarium fees, a very small quote that sounds like Orwell's but may be older: "No nation may count itself free of enemies so long as it claims a major writer in its midst." Coziness with, and trust of, government and large quasi-official institutions is a remarkable feature of Canadian life and one that writers can least afford to emulate.

There is, as I have suggested, a dangerous coziness

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built into the Canadian fabric - - - as John LeCarré mentioned in The Looking Glass War, "the Canadians, they still believe" - - - and while this trust might seem an attractive quality on this continent, I submit that it is, by now, misplaced. Corruption, racism, secrecy, arrogance, persecution all exist here in staggering openness and they are likely to grow because we do not like to believe the worst about our officials.

I know this from myself. When I came to Montreal I changed license plates on the first day - - so anxious was I to identify. The city then was beautiful and I was lover enough to write some stories I couldn't write now. Against mounting evidence, I wanted to believe that my adopted country had put aside its Mackenzie King rhetoric about being a white man's country. As I say, one has to want to believe passionately in order to overcome the evidence of one's own senses. I remember in 1967 when my wife was visiting her parents in India and I was home, getting a phone call at five in the morning from her in New Delhi, instructing me to meet her that evening in New York. The Canadians had refused her a landing permit, though she was a professor at McGill, and holder of all the proper papers. She was denied even a hearing by the High Commissioner's office in Delhi - - she wasn't even allowed to show her papers to an accrediting official, and the man who refused her - - a Quebecois who informed her she was a pig for working for the English in Montreal - - promised to have the RCMP meet the plane if she attempted to land directly in Canada. And it hasn't changed; it's gotten worse. Now it is unsafe for Indians in much of Vancouver, unsafe for blacks in much of Toronto. I spent all of last year in Calcutta and was treated - - if that is the word - - to endless tales of abuse suffered by qualified would-be immigrants to Canada, those with Ph.D.s and promised jobs, not being allowed beyond the first desk at the High Commissioner's, being insulted, laughed at, their papers lost, points capriciously assigned or deleted. So that no one mistakes our intentions, there are 53 Canadian immigration offices in the British Isles alone. Canada has no reason

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to squander its good name, or what was once its good name; it is doing this alone and by itself, not as America's surrogate, nor as Britain's. And then to return to the year of the Green Paper, a pre-arranged debate that emerges as little more than a committee-designed camel next to the study that is required. Outside Canada, especially in the Third World, it matters very little if the smug well-fed white man is processing you from a B-52 ten miles up, or from a single office a thousand miles away, if his intention is to deny your simple humanity. The selective immigration policy, selective to the extent of being available to whites and remote from others; rushing to embrace refugees when they have money and British passports (Uganda), money and criminal convictions (Vietnam), or white skins and anti communist credentials (Czechoslovakia), but not when they come from Chile or Haiti should make us all take notice and trust no longer.

When I say that conditions might change and that you might find yourself in an altered world by 1982, I of course mean that English Montreal as you have known it is surely going to change and may not exist at all. The physical destruction of the city, the daily drop-by-drop poison of broken promises, broken contracts, arrogance, abuse, non-accountability, the lack of master plans and the reliance upon delay, repression, muscle, intimidation, orders-in-council, and deficit spending into what must be the twenty-first century has transformed life in this city from sanity to circus. We are riding the tiger's back -- call it Expo, MUC, Olympics, James Bay, Mirabel -- in none of these projects were the voters truly consulted, in none were deliberations open, in none has there been political accountability, and in none was there a way of getting off without being devoured. Patterns have been set that will make a return to responsive government -- short of the spasm represented by the official opposition -- impossible. And we bear the blame for this. Our small -- liberal sentiments are easily co-opted by the big L Liberals; because we could not contemplate opposition to Jean Drapeau in 1970 we got the Olympics and the MUC; because

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we voted blindly for Bourassa (though probably the Parti Quebecois represented 90% of our political feelings) we got all the rest.

I'm speaking ex-cathedra tonight; writers shouldn't do that. Their politics are in their stories, in their characters. Writers' messages are very simple - - no one was ever corrupted by a novel, nor were they truly stimulated intellectually - - but people insist on making them complicated. Writers in this country, more and more, are getting pressed into a struggle that is not conducive to clear thinking or good literature. Politicians and manipulators and p.r. men don't like writers (or seek to use them, which amounts to the same thing) because good writers refuse to bring charges against outsiders. They keep looking into their own hearts, their own lives, and they find plenty of reasons for guilt in themselves, they can trace the sources of misery and failure from their own experience outward. This is the last thing a politician or a limited nationalist wants. He doesn't want a writer crying out to his people: "It's our own bloody fault." Sadat wants his writers to blame the Zionists. Israelis get censored for suggesting their own culpability. Russians, if famous enough, get exiled; if not, they're declared insane and never heard from again. All forms of repressions are employed in South America. A measure of a writer's success, some might say, is his degree of rejection by his own people. Joyce, Faulkner, D.H. Lawrence, Dostoyevski, Solzhenitsyn, Beckett, Mann, Hesse, Marquez, Naipaul, make up a list of enviably abused exiles and expatriates. And since we belong to that strongest tradition of free speech in the world, it is unlikely that we shall ever be censored or exiled or permanently silenced. We won't have such an easy way of knowing if we're telling the truth.

One way of knowing, I'm beginning to suspect, is when the Canadian writer begins receiving less and less invitations to speak and starts seeing that his speaking income begins again to match his royalties. Here is a distressing statistic: I made twenty times more this past year for

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being Clark Blaise in the flesh than I did from selling Tribal Justice in Canada. Joyce and Mann and Solzhenitsyn would not approve. Perhaps it's almost time to turn curmudgeonly, to start nastily spitting out rejections for interviews, lectures, readings and appearances. But that would only add to one's market value and sooner or later a price would come along that I couldn't refuse. I don't look back to the bad old days of colonial indifference when nothing Canadian was known, taught, or respected; neither do I think that we can take too many more years of Canada Days and flush times on the reading circuit without losing sight of the unrequited hatred that makes us writers in the first place. Somewhere along the line we must increase book sales and cut down the cheap celebrity. We must quit looking outside ourselves for the sources of our unhappiness.

So I close like any fiction writer. I promised more intellectual content than I delivered. Like Vonnegut I should say give up your early cynicism if you have it now - - conditions for happiness will never be better in your life than they are tonight - - the only cynicism that's worth having is the one that makes you expect more from yourself and that keeps your actions moral, if not pure.

And there's a line from Vonnegut worth repeating, and if what I've seen of St. George's kids holds up, it's a hopeful line. "When you get to be our age," an old Indianapolis friend tells Vonnegut, "you all of a sudden realize that you are being ruled by people you went to high school with."

I think your luck will be a lot better than mine.

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Sterne's Tristram Shandy (referred to, incidentally, by Butler), Joyce's Ulysses, Woolf's The Waves and Cohen's Beautiful Losers. Butler pursues the techniques he used in The Garbageman (1972) and moves further away from the documentary realism he employed in Cabbagetown Diary (1970). He has chosen one of the most difficult forms in which to work. Surrealistic fantasy with its surface irrationality demands a firm framework to which the reader can relate apparently random incidents and images. Butler does not give us such a framework and the novel seems like a Christmas tree decoration --- all glitter on the surface, but hollow inside. His pretentious philosophizing does not help. His novel remains superficial and glib, despite some fine rhythmic passages and a few hilariously funny scenes. Although Butler's exuberance is indisputable, the need for editing, revising and refining is painfully obvious. It is no surprise to learn that his novels have all been written in single, unrevised drafts.

As a study of the "death of the colonial mentality" Canadian Healing Oil cannot compare with recent treatments of the same theme such as Margaret Laurence's The Diviners or Margaret Atwood's Surfacing. Butler fails to give universal significance to the national quest for identity. It remains too simply a stream-of-consciousness travelogue of a Canada Council excursion. Canuck, stay home.

DOCUMENTARIES OF CHAOS / POEMS OF COPULATION

review by LOUIS DUDEK

DA VINCI PRESS
Four Books - Montreal, 1974

From Yr Lover Like An Orchestra by Ian Ferrier
Arctic Char In Grecian Waters by Tom Ezzy
Szerbusz by André Farkas
Dakini by Claudia Lapp

Well, we know that before there is any finished poetry there is the experience of writing poetry. And sometimes there is only the experience.

All these young poets are at the preliminary stage. It's the agony, the joy, the flowing expression that comes through in a formless way, even if there is not yet any finished poem to show for it.

I read Claudia Lapp's "High Blue" -- a childhood memory of a music box -- in a review in the Gazette, and was so pleased with it that I went out and bought the book. The rest was a bit disappointing. Erotic spreads and sprawls, without any high ritual or paradisaical dimension to justify the bowel-movement realism of it all. A great deal of highly-personal self-exposition.

It's the problem of all four books. Confessional poetry without a priest or a god to confess to. It becomes a record of lost nameless people wandering through tenement bedrooms and desolate city streets, hopping from party to party and from pad to pad.

Ian Ferrier's book is the most extreme example, as a documentary of chaos, and it has the least form, as

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presentation. It consists mainly of prose poems, revealing messy lives, all going nowhere; and by extension, the poetry itself is not aiming at a higher aesthetic but is drawn down to the messiness of the surrounding environment.

André Farkas is similarly confessional and horrifyingly documentary. Weakest in the explicit political poems. But if there are no perfect poems there are good lines - -

"We sit in darkness
each shadow
takes turns
surprising itself"

Tom Ezzy is a bit more structured, but like Lapp and Ferrier he writes what we must call, not "love poems", but poems of copulation - - explicit sexual reportage out of the sad life of promiscuity: sex experiences in the midst of which the lover asks his companion "Who are you?" -- or lyrical poems like "Aubade", composed of sentimental clichés -- the two sides of the coin.

The ones who suffer in this game are the women, of course, as we can see in Ezzy's sequence entitled "At the Party":

"If I Could look behind your eyes
perhaps I'd see
a weeping little girl away from home."

The one point that recommends the poetry - - all four books -- is its honesty. As a record of contemporary reality it has its merits; but then, poetry should be more than a record, it should be a take-off from the real. To make the finished thing must be the next objective: After all, if you can't do that -- have you written poetry?

NEW POEMS



GAYLE ANDERSON

children quick stick
pink tongues
or
catch
on wooly thumb
frozen and rigid
thumbs become
snowcrusts ever so if
it seems veryhard
SEEING
SNOWflakes
or Eating snowflakes
who do
twist and melt
but floating
DOWN
somehow fly
with all those holes
QUICK!STICK PINK TONGUES
harder
Seeing all those (children

death
is a shudder(we think)or
 pause
 displacing
one million angels
from the head of A Pin
who Fall(asleep)
snowing
all over the place(we think
 or pause

cold little shells
of angelSkins

(we think or pause)
displacing
one million angels

who Only melt
 (we think

.

or pause.....

topsey nico
ravenback mare
you are crafted
into rooms of memory:
in a picture
framed with ribbons
carl leroi boynton
and his tall lean horse

topsey nico
with sadset eyes
a nose as straight
as crows fly
from ways mills to huntingdon;
carl leroi
small sicklechild
tripleggy filly
who nobody wanted

carl leroi in squarehat
pushed grease from his brow
laughed
when he thought of you

(as hoofbeats
down countryroads echo
as old leather
dying

of cancer

over trophies
more rust than silver
stands roundlegs
under sadset eyes
of topsey who paced
from valleyfield home
leather reins
sleep
across ravenback

GUY BIRCHARD

When open up the deeper avenues
down to the spirit break and daimon copse
I and I cling so close, it integrate
& I and I evaporate

strange to see the shapes grow, enliven
and expand - except for the extent of mortal life/like
time-lapse photography, you would be a stranger
forever - a wandering goy - a professional
gypsy. But the time it takes

keeps hid the thousand infants
the myriad spirits that inhabit fixed locations
if only for an instant.

Time keeps hid the countless instants.

THE SHAPE OF THE MOUTH

a bow
 from which words are aimed
and language is quieted
with a hope and inevitability
 that graces her
as a kiss
is similarly shaped.

TRANSVERSE

no other direction possible

the curve the old ecstatic makes
leaping, arms widespread,
into the valley from the peak
into the embrace of his lord

(his own shadow, friends, his very
fuckin shadow)

and the closer you get to him there on the brink
the more untenable his position seems
and the more intransigent you force
the Fool to become
never knowing,
you, never knowing

the promise he's found kept

RITCHIE CARSON

OCT 70 REVISITED

something among these cities died that day
not only because they imprisoned searched
& beat up homes not only & not just from
rumors

like the young soldier who shot himself
jumping down from a truck, safety off
he was dead at the 4th re-telling

or those who might have shot
like the one who guarded Mountain St never did
safety consciously off, he took aim at me
the stiff-legged radical
going to visit the poet next door
he was an acadian buddhist priest
i was in exile in Ottawa yelling vive le quebec libre
stoning higher higher education & drunk
(i had to be drunk before i saw him
liquor was prohibitted in the temple
unless already imbibed)

& if he had fired, even accidentally,
would the game officials have cared
even if, & there would be no if at all,
if he had killed.

i wonder
why were they all so short, those
little soldiers we all looked down at
even the woman across from Station 10
did her nightly striptease for them
looking down
could they have all been so small
or did they send their shorties on purpose
so as not to frighten us too much.

GAUDETTE

gaudette is not a deity here
just a name i found painted
advertising on a panel truck
a plumber on St Denis maybe
a laundry steam & clean it

here in this land of dice
unseen armies gambol
toss strangled bodies to
the wind whispers
heroed names smothered
by that particular night

priests plead caskets here
funerals snarl the streets
policemen play with picket
lines in holiday formation
the clubs shields shrieks

no gaudette is not a deity just
frenchman beckett's stranger's wife
received a call from wanderer
she rushes...someone's waiting.

ST URBAIN ST

here in the ghetto the horseman died
not really here but did he ever leave
did he really die in bowlered London
or trudge into smogbound delirium.

he could have been born next door
or stood with a friend stoning pigeons from that porch
would he believe how the times haven't changed
Ernie upstairs uses a gun / hits one bird per week
& the 15 year old fucks friday nights
where his hooved feet might have been.

ANDRÉ FARKAS

360 DEGREES

a lone fly circles me
the buzz of this lone fly encircles me

this lone poem circles me
the buzz of this lone poem encircles me

beware of a lone buzzing that circles in circles
and never lands long enough
for me to grasp.

I THINK I'LL CALL IT SUNDAY EVENING

we sit supping
i'm looking through a poetry mag
left hand holding the page down
right one fishing with a spoon

should i finish the line
or turn to swallow
man does not live by blah blah SLURP

i'm doing the dishes
she's emptying the garbage
CRACK
something break
bug-off farknich she yells
and gooses me as she goes by

i've got the yin urge she says
i give her the 35¢ i have
she's about to go get herself a chocolate bar
then decides against it

i'll make some cookies instead
aloud she muses

DEMOLITION CREW

with a few well chosen words
i have just demolished you

now
from my mouth broken open
aftersounds dangle like a wrecker's ball
after hours, serene now

against the dust free sky
from the direction of the violent horizon
i am kissed by a toothless summer breeze

3 SOCIO LOGICAL QUESTIONS

-1-

is there a home for old whores
where sagging lips may spend their last days
in peace; exchanging tales
about young peni of old

-2-

is this country man enough
to allot a decent pension to these old cunts
who have made all, without exception,
equally soft

-3-

is there room in a heaven
where these bed veterans may recline
on white linen and be rewarded
with freedom to spread their thighs in view
of god and angels and not have to douche

ARTIE GOLD

THE DOOMSDAY MICE-TRAP

- Helping mice 'forget'

Inviting

one over

to meet the little woman -

regaining their trust.

- A slow arduous must

for we must build

POORER MICE (If ever

we're) TO GET AHEAD
IN THIS FIELD .

Ecology (and that's what

everyone's worrying about

these days.)

Is MAKING THOSE
INFLUENTIAL FRIENDS

OUR MISTRESSES

Cows'll come running , stockpile cheese
at th pull of a Wild SPRING TIT.

To imagine how
cold it was that day
would be to snap
five or six
photos

up wards.

contin
-uous
in frames -ly
rising
smoke
the

as a pulse
or barber-pole
never moves
in its own length

pas
-in
g t
hru
its
elf

focus undiminished, the point
of focus was undiminished. &
I stared at it, seeing the cold
shivering with the cold
spaced out as the cold was .

Russ Rufus (he was a
real rapsallion from I_A_W_A_Y
he'd stare thru blonde or dirty blonde curls
with his blue eyes, say
"I aren't sure, Artie, I
just aren't sure"
and I'd say, Russ
the HELL YOU ISN'T !! or

we'd shoot down to Juarez from Denver
in his '54 Ford with T-bird engine.

he'd carry a pocket full of blasting caps
just in case
he'd find a building or something

and we'd run over rattlesnakes
on the Valley Highway
at 105.

He worked in a boiler factory in Sedalia, Missouri
/with his dad who was foreman
and said he oughtn't to
really go to COLLEGE
(yuh know.

and Russ was real crazy
in a provincial way
down I_A_W_A_Y way

he said he was from
mizoorah.

These damp winters Montreal suffers
recording temperatures with scar tissue on lungs
the gasoline spring
of active bacteria
lying in snow banks

the world is infirm, the snow
incendiary threatening to expose
the decomposed leaves that lie rotting
beneath the nuggets

of shapeless dew.
The ammonia, can't you smell the ammonia?
that stings my nose.

Our stove arrived last night
we spent hours polishing it; though god knows
it arrived as shiny as new.

it juts out
into th kitchen like a scene from Fellini
or Magritte assemblage
we may as well
have a Buick Special
parked in our small living-room. Humic acids,
it is humic acids at work
exciting th cat.

BARRY KATZ

IN THE CAPITOL OF HUMAN PROVINCE

The peoples' movement, with shovels and linen gloves
takes

4 months

52 feet down . rolling up 26 bamboo mats
through 2 to 4 feet of clay 5 tons of charcoal
priceless grave goods 3 simple coffins
3 ornate casks and the banner fei i,

still two thousand years, fei i flies
reborn sun setting sleep opened eyes
on the Lady Ch'angsha, her silent silk cover
gilded paths of loyal red serpents and fish
guard her jade cave in the sky
her silver chains of hot mist around Chang O
moon dragon, slayer of false suns,
who lost eternity in the palm of her hand
and died somewhere unknown,
above cloud on Ch'angsha's breast
the witness fei i,
one red eye black crow on full red sun
still two thousand years,

. . .

• • •

Chinese scientists with tweezers and sifting bowls
devour every grain of grave shell, shaking with fever
replacing each speck (prepare to do it all again)
trying to exact space as if it were
trap mistress Ch'angsha in her sleep
dissect her inner chambers
investigate every orifice, but
she is gone,
the banner fei i lies
still two thousand years,

she is gone
gone through caves to her hidden moon
to Chang O
red eye black crow of perfect red sun,

the banner fei i is still.

DIANE KEATING

IN A ROOM FACING YONGE STREET

We lie naked
our used bodies flung
like gloves on the bare floor,
heavy and soft bellied
smelling of hot wet soil
recently plowed.

With ears of an earthworm
I listen to the steady whir of a car
burrowing through tons of loose dark
until light flashes across the room
biting into our backs and thighs
like flames, reviving us.

Now we are separate
rooms with walls of skin
streets with fences of bone
trying like pale moles
to push through
all the openings.

ASH WEDNESDAY

What can you have done
To slip so far into this ashen hole?

I caught a white moth for fun
It lay in my hand a child's dead soul.

And what do you see that your breath
Tolls a warning through murky air?

In every mirror I see the gold-eyed bat of death
Swooping around and around my hair.

Tell me, what in the night makes
Your thought into snares, your prayer into bait?

My mattress is stuffed with silver snakes
On each bed post a dusky vulture waits.

How will you escape this cave, this cocoon
Of shadows crushing in like lead?

I'll climb on dreams until I grip the moon
In my teeth and a crimson cloud helmets my head.

CAROL LECKNER

SHOES

The miles
do not exist
when I think
of your toes
and the curling
of hair
near your temples;
I have not massaged you
and that is refreshing
nor have I shown
(or hidden)
my professional self
yet worry about
courage and honesty,
balance of energy.
The prospect of our meeting
burns my chest,
I anticipate your toes
neatly in shoes
that remind me of cartoons
but the way you walk
is how I admire it
and the shape of your hands is perfect.

My friend Fred
who hung himself
had a wry line
on the inside of
his index finger.

I used to watch its subtle
distortion
amidst the strength of his hands.

Your hands are perfect
though you have similar shoes.

WITHOUT COVER

Today I walked St. Catherine Street
and saw the house
the factory built.
a store placed it in its window.
a hamster sat
on a green chair
smoking a pipe
reading The Little Prince
his white cat curled
before the fire
and vaseflowers
were chinese mute in tone

but the blowers
oh the blowers
were sparkle yellow
like the sun
covered by the snow
above our heads

. . .

. . .

hamster turned the page
of her he loved
when night was
red
and petals
graced
the planet.
but prince,
oh little prince,
was too young
to love
and left his lady
without a cover.

I in winter snow
ran home
and saw the boots I wore
to beat the slush
and gloves I changed
from lined to fair

my young prince
too young to love
sent me home
without cover

KEITHA MacINTOSH

J.F.K.

Roses are red
and violets are
but Jack, I

Jackie too
of course
it didn't seem

know I couldn't
believe 'cause I
was your child

that address in
arlington well I
automatically

there must
have been

really did for
give my pre
sumption

as though, well
children didn't
seem real you

birth-sacced
I guess so.
when they gave you

moved in too
forgive please so
nervy of me

a billion
others
who

HERO

Laughing hair enchanted purple eyes
and lips deep as hot pools
We took each other and gave us
us and flashing golden arms
sprayed by the sea two trees
rising together our saps
mingling in celebration.

Again I seek you and find
you have become a name
upon a monument a KIA
with medals you can't know.)
 you can't feel.)
 in a box.) Choose one
 on your chest.)
 in a drawer.)

ROBERT MORRISON

THE LADY OF THE LOOM

The bourdon beat
deep in the heart
falls.
In the diastolic pause
a hushed coo releases.

A tiny bird bathes in the aeorta
shakes delicate drops of blood from its wingtips.
A tiny dove rolls into focus
answering the call of its mate.
It can enter the skull
it can enter the spine
it lodges in the lumbar region.
Cartilage cracks.
The pinned dove wrenches its legs free
its beak tugs the sciatic root
releases the bubbles of pain.
They float quietly to the brain.

The lady of the loom
stands in the skull.
Her mirror gathers all
as the expanding bubbles
trickle to the glass floor.
At each hushed tap
she weaves a wide knot
into her tapestry.
She has caught it all:
the hushed coo
the drops of blood
the tap of pain.
Her mirror casts the bubbles
trickling down her cheeks.

She has caught it all:
she weeps
she weaves
she weeps.

STEPHEN MORRISSEY

POEM

there are seashells and cats
and on the beach which is a line

of grey sand there are people standing
where the sky meets the earth

if there was a photograph
i wd place you in it

standing in front of a white house
just behind where the photograph was taken

and inside the white house
there are empty rooms and quiltz

and you are saying "reason over passion"
in 40 foot high letters as I take your picture

when it is developed all we see is the white house
and think how silent it is with only

the sound of the sea
and a seagull circling over the white house

and then flying back out to sea
where it circles a fishing boat

in one room is a lobster trap
and a mantel and on the mantel

are shells that you have pickt up on your daily walks
there is one room which is filled with rocks

that you have collected with smoothness and
roundness in mind

. . .

later you took these rocks to montreal in a truck
& had a show which was documented with photographs

and these photographs now lie in a drawer
in that white house

in one window which has caught your reflection
and seems to hold onto it like a negative

there is a cat sitting and watching you walk along
the beach and I am taking your photograph

in your hand is a shell that you pickt up
and I have arranged rocks on the beach so that

they read "leave off fine book larning"
and I am taking all of these photographs

which I tack onto trees and we watch the rain and wind
wear them away and wonder abt the passing years

and some photographs I drop into the lobster trap
and you take it down to the sea and when you return

they have dissolved in the salt water
there is a quilt lying on the bed and in the quilt

there is a sleeping cat
and as I turn to photograph the house

she rises and yawns
and you have your children whom you teach to draw

and they are walking with you along the beach
I do not take any photographs of myself

but once I caught a likeness
reflected in a pool of water

it is an image I sometimes catch
among all of the images I have had of you

KEN NORRIS

"Poems are always better than a bloody turkey
foot in the mailbox."

Jim Harrison

Notes on the Ghazals

Two vestiges
 of something
Once living
 a moment
A feeling
 a turkey.
The poem
 is a whole
Made out of
 the dead thing,
Rounded and formed,
 a baby
From the womb
 the alembic
Found
 In the stomach
In line
 with the head
In contact
 with the heart.
The bloody turkey foot
 is a searcher,
A piece
 looking
For the greater whole
 be it lying
Lifeless on the ground
 or carved
On the platter.
 It wants
A way back.

TABLES

"Tables are the forethoughts and
afterthoughts of beds."

A cup of tea
On a houndstooth table.
I raise it to my lips,
Set it down again,
Watch beads of married milk and tea
Descend down the porcelain smoothness.
I am here with her.

I have sat at tables
 in kitchens and mansions
In Wisconsin
 and cafeterias.
I have left cups and dinners
 for other places.
This table is square in a twilight room.

She has been married,
Has had countless tables
 in various apartments.
She has had a husband's eyes
 looking up at her
Over breakfast eggs and coffee.

Another table for us both.

IN THE SUPERMARKET

I am in the supermarket
 surveying
The prospects of the dairy section
When a female hand
 darts out
Of nowhere
And quickly plucks
 a huge round of gouda cheese
From the shelf.
I am astounded --
 the cheese is above my means.
I turn to observe
 the face of the fortunate lady
Who can afford such extravagance.
She is a pigtailed beauty
Wrapped in a leather coat.
My emotions rise;
I love her and her cheese.

Quickly she is off, pushing
Her cart before I can say a word.
So I go on shopping.
I cool my passions by perusing
A section of frozen foods.
But later, over turnips, we meet again.
My love grows
Among the fruits and vegetables.
I decide to hold an asparagus
 between my teeth
And dance with the flash of a flamenco;
But she disappears again
After taking advice from a counterman
About raisins.

• • •

. . .

I go back to my purchasing.
I squeeze a tomato, caress an eggplant,
Get excited about the price of lettuce.
In the bread section I decide
That if we ever meet again
 I will give her a potato
To show my affection.
If she accepts it
 we will stroll through the store,
Our purchases in one mutual cart,
 and sing praises
To the A & P,
 our divine matchmaker.
We will be like apple pie and ice cream,
 pork and beans,
Baked potato and sour cream.
And I came here looking for food!
Bah, mere sustenance!
In this atmosphere of plenty
I have found love!
I remember that she has vanished among the aisles.
I look for her in soups, cereals, salad dressings;
She is not there.
On to meats, cookies, spices;
 Alas!
In despair
 I decide to check out;
She stands before me,
Emptying her cart onto the conveyor;
She moves with such grace.

. . .

. . .

I observe the bounty of her cart.
She has cans of cat food,
A sure sign of loneliness.
Besides the cheese
 which brought her
Into my blood
She has minor items.
She has an eggplant wrapped in cellophane.
My cart contains one too:
A common affinity.
A jar of meat sauce, stewed tomatoes.
She plays with a pigtail as she waits.
The check-out girl is slow.
My love speaks to the girl in the language of the land;
Perhaps they briefly discuss Quebec appetites.

I cannot tell; I am not a delicate crepe
Nor a stocky bouillabaise; I'm an English stew,
Worse than that, American,
A hamburger with french fries and a coke.

My heart sinks.
Her total is soon added,
The items placed in bags.
She pays and turns to leave.
I want to call out to her a recipe,
A helpful hint about spaghetti, anything.

Too late, too late.
All the way home
I long for her company at dinner.

GILBERT PLAW

Sky's the uppermost
As flatdown backgoes

On Sherbrooke we bought gold
fish
And dreamed lucre
As watercool they flashed
past

At home
We ate hamburg
and potatoes
fried

In throneroom
Later
I wonder at words
Fish
And Potatoes

ACADEMY TRIBUTE 74

It's funny
Cagney old, a hooper,
Being honored and quoting
Masfield

And I remember
The tough guy
In the dark theatre
Of my childhood Saturday:
The walk four blocks to school
The limping gimp
Grinding teeth around a twisted smile
And whispering "Ya dirty rats!"
And the sidewalk deaths
Shot in the back by the squint-eyed killer
Feeling my blood in gutterrun
Kingston cum Chicago

Now he's up there
Reading his speech
Printed inch high on shaking paper
And I hear the film trailer
Flap and snap
Flap and snap
And the screen go bright and flickering

A public convenience
Must be approached
With caution

One simply cannot
Sit down anywhere
Brushing cheeks with anonymous cheeks
Now faceless

Some hairy
Some not
Some unclean
Some not
Some white
Some not

One must not
Sit
Without precautions
For who can tell what treasures
The seat possesses
To snake up
The exposed and vulnerable
Tail of the spine

FOUR HAIKU

These two birds sit split
Joined by a black branch growing
A separation

Bird alone on branch
Pecks and pulls beneath her wing
Digging long-live-worms

Lying limp in hand
The black bird - strangescented - strikes
Wild the icesmooth blood

Floating beneath thighs
Bird with terrifying wing
Waves as if alive.

DAVID OWEN WEEKES

I am sweeping

Moonlight wiggles
over grey
tumble-weed dust

falls into laquered
graves

Through my thin
broom promises
slip:
film on your wooden
face

You are beating
up against
the floorboards

I bend exhume
mummified words that collapse
powder on new
breath not
even pain of
splinters

You shake
out death's
dusty dance

into close
night
I sweep.

DEATH AT TWENTY

It is arguable, of
this space between
each other, that one
needs to collapse
into, a certain comfort-
able amount of
space reserved for
death corking the
sky with a
moon but to do
it so quickly that
all the eyeballs
are caught
squeaking,
today

today the birds
flew away with the trees
nailed to their bodies.

CONTRIBUTORS

PREVIEW

Richard Sommer

ESSAYS AND REVIEWS

Clarke Blaise
Elspeth Cameron
Louis Dudek

NEW POEMS

Gayle Anderson
Guy Birchard
Ritchie Carson
Andre Farkas
Artie Gold
Barry Katz
Diane Keating
Carol Leckner
Keitha MacIntosh
Robert Morrison
Stephen Morrissey
Ken Norris
Gilbert Plaw
David Owen Weekes

\$2.00



2021